

APPENDIX D

Section 5317: New Freedom Program

OVERVIEW

New Freedom funds are to be used to provide additional tools to overcome existing barriers facing Americans with disabilities seeking integration into the work force and full participation in society.

PROGRAM GOALS

The New Freedom formula grant program aims to provide additional tools to overcome existing barriers facing Americans with disabilities seeking integration into the work force and full participation in society. Lack of adequate transportation is a primary barrier to work for individuals with disabilities. The 2000 Census showed that only 60 percent of people between the ages of 16 and 64 with disabilities are employed. The New Freedom formula grant program seeks to reduce barriers to transportation services and expand the transportation mobility options available to people with disabilities beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

New Freedom Program funds are available for capital and operating expenses that support new public transportation services beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and new public transportation alternatives beyond those required by the ADA designed to assist individuals with disabilities with accessing transportation services, including transportation to and from jobs and employment support services. For the purpose of the New Freedom Program, “new” service is any service or activity that was not operational on August 10, 2005, and did not have an identified funding source as of August 10, 2005, as evidenced by inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) or the STIP. In other words, if not for the New Freedom Program, these projects would not have consideration for funding and proposed service enhancements would not be available for individuals with disabilities.

Maintenance of Effort: Recipients may not terminate ADA paratransit enhancements or other services funded as of August 10, 2005, in an effort to reintroduce the services as “new” and then receive New Freedom funds for those services.

Eligible projects funded with New Freedom funds may continue to be eligible for New Freedom funding indefinitely as long as the project(s) continue to be part of the coordinated plan.

Both new public transportation services and new public transportation alternatives are required to go beyond the requirements of the ADA and must (1) be targeted toward individuals with disabilities; and (2) meet the intent of the program by removing barriers to transportation and assisting persons with disabilities with transportation, including transportation to and from jobs and employment services.

The list of eligible activities is intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive. Recipients are encouraged to develop innovative solutions to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities in their communities.

New Public Transportation Services Beyond the ADA. The following activities are examples of eligible projects meeting the definition of new public transportation.

- Enhancing paratransit beyond minimum requirements of the ADA. ADA complementary paratransit services can be eligible under New Freedom in several ways as long as the services provided meet the definition of “new:”
 - Expansion of paratransit service parameters beyond the three-fourths mile required by the ADA;
 - Expansion of current hours of operation for ADA paratransit services that are beyond those provided on the fixed-route services;
 - The incremental cost of providing same day service;
 - The incremental cost of making door-to-door service available to all eligible ADA paratransit riders, but not as a reasonable modification for individual riders in an otherwise curb-to-curb system;
 - Enhancement of the level of service by providing escorts or assisting riders through the door of their destination;
 - Acquisition of vehicles and equipment designed to accommodate mobility aids that exceed the dimensions and weight ratings established for common wheelchairs under the ADA and labor costs of aides to help drivers assist passengers with over-sized wheelchairs. This would permit the acquisition of lifts with a larger capacity, as well as modifications to lifts with a 600 lb design load, and the acquisition of heavier-duty vehicles for paratransit and/or demand-response service; and
 - Installation of additional securement locations in public buses beyond what is required by the ADA.
- (2) Feeder services. New “feeder” service (transit service that provides access) to commuter rail, commuter bus, intercity rail, and intercity bus stations, for which complementary paratransit service is not required under the ADA.
- (3) Making accessibility improvements to transit and intermodal stations not designated as key stations. This may include:
 - Building an accessible path to a bus stop that is currently inaccessible, including curbcuts, sidewalks, accessible pedestrian signals or other accessible features,
 - Adding an elevator or ramps, detectable warnings, or other accessibility improvements to a non-key station that are not otherwise required under the ADA,
 - Improving signage, or wayfinding technology, or
 - Implementation of other technology improvements that enhance accessibility for people with disabilities including Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS).
- (4) Travel training. New training programs for individual users on awareness, knowledge, and skills of public and alternative transportation options available in their communities. This includes travel instruction and travel training services.

New Public Transportation Alternatives Beyond the ADA. The following activities are examples of projects that are eligible as new public transportation alternatives beyond the ADA under the New Freedom Program:

- Purchasing vehicles to support new accessible taxi, ride sharing, and/or vanpooling programs.
- Supporting the administration and expenses related to new voucher programs for transportation services offered by human service providers.
- Supporting new volunteer driver and aide programs.
- Supporting new mobility management and coordination programs among public transportation providers and other human service agencies providing transportation. Mobility management activities may include:
 - The promotion, enhancement, and facilitation of access to transportation services, including the integration and coordination of services for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and low-income individuals;
 - Support for short term management activities to plan and implement coordinated services;
 - The support of State and local coordination policy bodies and councils;
 - The operation of transportation brokerages to coordinate providers, funding agencies and customers;
 - The provision of coordination services, including employer-oriented Transportation Management Organizations' and Human Service Organizations' customer-oriented travel navigator systems and neighborhood travel coordination activities such as coordinating individualized travel training and trip planning activities for customers;
 - The development and operation of one-stop transportation traveler call centers to coordinate transportation information on all travel modes and to manage eligibility requirements and arrangements for customers among supporting programs; and
 - Operational planning for the acquisition of intelligent transportation technologies to help plan and operate coordinated systems inclusive of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping, Global Positioning System Technology, coordinated vehicle scheduling, dispatching and monitoring technologies as well as technologies to track costs and billing in a coordinated system and single smart customer payment systems (acquisition of technology is also eligible as a stand alone capital expense).

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

There are three categories of eligible recipients of JARC funds:

- a. Private non-profit organizations;
- b. State or local governmental authority; and
- c. Operators of public transportation services, including private operators of public transportation services.

MATCH REQUIREMENT

New Freedom funds may be used to finance capital, planning and operating expenses. The Federal share of eligible capital and planning costs may not exceed 80 percent of the net cost of the activity. The Federal share of the eligible operating costs may not exceed 50 percent of the net operating costs of the activity.

All of the local share must be provided from sources other than Federal DOT funds. Some examples of sources of local match which may be used for any or all of the local share include: State or local appropriations; other non-DOT Federal funds; dedicated tax revenues; private donations; revenue from human service contracts; toll revenue credits; and net income generated from advertising and concessions. Non-cash share such as donations, volunteered services, or in-kind contributions is eligible to be counted toward the local match as long as the value of each is documented and supported, represents a cost which would otherwise be eligible under the program, and is included in the net project costs in the project budget.